MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS

A NEW (?) CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF AURANGZEB'S REIGN

Among the contemporary writers on Aurangzeb's reign, Muhammad Kāzim of 'Ālamgīr Nāma, Rai Bindrāban of Lubb-ut-Tawārīkh, Musta'id Khān of Ma'āsir-i-'Ālamgīrī, Īshar Dāss of Fatūhāt-i-'Ālamgīrī, Bhīm Sen of Nuskha-i-Dilkushā and Khāfī Khān of Muntakhib-Al-Lubāb occupy a very important place. But the place of honour among chronicles of Aurangzeb's reign has so far been occupied by Khāfī Khān's Muntakhib-al-Lubāb. He has been wearing a triple crown as a historian. His love of history and sacrifices he was prepared to make in its cause are—so it is said—proved by his facing the wrath of Aurangzeb rather than abandon his work. His impartiality is borne out by his occasional flings at Aurangzeb and his policy. His unique place among historians of Mughal India is assured by his compiling an account of the *entire reign* of Aurangzeb.

But a critical examination of his history of 'Ālamgīr's reign proves him to be one of the biggest imposters among historians. He nowhere mentions himself that he went on compiling an account of Aurangzeb's reign during the life-time of the emperor. He refers to the Ma'āsir-i-'Ālamgīrī of Musta'id Khān which was compiled after the death of Aurangzeb. He claims to have examined Rai Bindrāban's Lubb-ut-Tawārīkh which was not written earlier than 1694. He speaks of the 'Ālamgīr Nāma of Muhammad Kāzim which closes with the 10th year of Aurangzeb's reign.[1] To have used Ma'āsir-i-'Ālamgīrī and find out its defects, Khāfī Khān's history could not have been written during Aurangzeb's times. In another place he gives an indication of the date of the composition. While describing the carrying off

[1] Khāfī Khān, ii, 212.

of Ajīt Singh, son of Mahārājā Jaswant Singh from Delhi, Khāfī Khān adds that Aurangzeb went on describing him as an imposter till he was married to a daughter of the Mahārānā of Udaipur.[1] Obviously this could not have been written before this marriage which could not have taken place earlier than the nineties of the seventeenth century. While narrating the account of Muhammad Murād Bakhsh, Khāfī Khān claims to describe the events as detailed to him by his father, who was a trusted servant of Murād Bakhsh, implying thereby that he himself had no personal knowledge of the events. Khāfī Khān began the writing of his book in the year A.H. 1030 (1717), as he himself seems to indicate in the introduction to the first volume,[2] and completed it in A.H. 1045 (1732), to which date he brings down his narrative in the second volume. Thus even according to our author the book was begun ten years after the death of Aurangzeb,[3] all the pains the author had to take concerned collecting materials from such sources as he could then command. He had, as we have already seen, certain general contemporary histories of Aurangzeb's reign to help him.

Though he has named some of these works, he has scrupulously avoided mentioning an author whose writings he used most. This is another historian of Aurangzeb, Abu'l Fazl Ma'mūrī. Khāfī Khān has purloined his history of Aurangzeb almost verbatim. Unfortunately, the only two extant copies of this work are found bound up with a history of the reign of Shah Jahan, Shāh Jahān Nāma of Sādiq Khān. One of these copies belonged to Sir H. M. Elliot.[4] Professor Dowson, who examined it, rightly came to the conclusion

[1] Khāfī Khān, ii, 260.
This addition is not to be found in Abu'l Fazl.

[2] Vol. i, p. 2.

[3] Even Professor Dowson's addition to Sir H. M. Elliot's note on Khāfī Khān (Elliot and Dowson, vol. vii, p. 209) wrongly asserts that Khāfī Khān compiled an account of the reign of Aurangzeb during the emperor's life-time, and kept it suppressed.

[4] Elliot and Dowson, vol. vii, p. 133.

that the account of the reign of Aurangzeb that it contained could not have been written by Sādiq Khān. He dismissed the matter there without probably examining the account itself in detail, as it seemed to him a copy of Khāfī Khān with only slight variations.[1] The other copy of this work is bound up with a modern MS. of Shāh Jahān Nāma of Sādiq Khān in the State Library, Rampur (India). In the course of my work on a Bibliography of the Mughal Period of Indian History, I examined this MS. last summer by the courtesy of the State authorities. An analysis of the work revealed the fact that though it seems to be a copy of Khāfī Khān, it claims an author of its own, Abu'l Fazl Ma'mūri.[2] The author's name is mentioned in several places, and we are also informed about the important places he filled in the reign of Aurangzeb. He is further mentioned in the 'Ālamgīr Nāma and the first volume of Khāfī Khān. From all these sources we learn that he accompanied Aurangzeb from Burhānpur when he started for the North for the purpose of disputing succession to Shah Jahan's empire.[3] He was first of all raised to the rank of a commander of 1,000, and after the battle of Dharmat he was promoted to the command of 1,500.[4] Early in Aurangzeb's reign he seems to have been appointed Darogha-i-Buyūtāt which office he occupied for thirty years till the thirty-sixth year of Aurangzeb's reign.[5] Towards the end of the year 25 he was appointed Waqa'-i-Nawīs of Burhānpur to hold it along with his old appointment as a Mīr-i-Sāmān.[6] In the year 1686 he was sent to the army commanded by Prince A'zam with some important instructions.[7] In the year 36 of Aurangzeb's reign, he was appointed Mīr-i-Bahr.[8] He seems to have either continued in the department of Buyūtāt or was again reverted thereto,

[1] Elliot and Dowson, vol. vii, p. 133.
[2] Rampur MS., p. 577.
[3] Khāfī Khān, vol. i, p. 747.
[4] 'Alamgīr Nāma, pp. 53, 77.
[5] Abu'l Fazl's history of the reign of Aurangzeb, Rampur MS., p. 653.
[6] Ibid., p. 548. [7] Ibid., p. 577. [8] Ibid., p. 653.

as we find him visiting the army besieging Panhāla with certain important papers in the year 44.[1] In the year 46 he was employed as a negotiator on behalf of the besieging Mughal commanders to settle the terms of surrender with Parśrāma, the commander of the fort of Khelna, which they were besieging.[2] He seems to have survived Aurangzeb.

The author mentions certain events which he himself witnessed. He was present in Delhi when the Hindus from the city and the neighbouring places gathered together for the purpose of holding a demonstration of protest against the imposition of the Jizya.[3] Earlier still he saw the musicians of Delhi carry the bier of music to the burial ground when Aurangzeb banished them from the court.[4]

An examination of this MS. proves that Khāfī Khān incorporated it almost word for word in his own history. Where he differs from its text, it is usually in suppressing the personal part played by Abu'l Fazl in various affairs. Not only is the prose narrative a copy of the account written by Abu'l Fazl, but the verses used by both to embellish their works are almost the same. There seems no reason to doubt that the original account of Aurangzeb's reign which Khāfī Khān subsequently made his own, was written by Abu'l Fazl. It covers pp. 378 to 733 of the Rampur MS. It closes with the death of Aurangzeb, short of the account of the burial which Khāfī Khān gives. The work really comes to an end with the verses found on p. 549 of Khāfī Khān, volume ii.

It may be suggested that our author may have copied Khāfī Khān's account of the reign. This is impossible. To have been able to use Khāfī Khān's history which was completed in 1732, our author must have lived at least more than 105 years. During the time of the war of succession he was raised to the command of 1,500. To have attained that rank, he must have been about 30 at least. Copies of Khāfī Khān's history could not have become common

[1] Ibid., p. 699. [2] Ibid., p. 707. [3] Ibid., p. 529. [4] Ibid., p. 491.

till some time after its completion in 1722. To have copied it then, and that too up to the account of Aurangzeb's death, suppressing the account of Aurangzeb's burial, would seem unreasonable, as well as unprofitable. It is more reasonable to suppose that just as Khāfī Khān used Sādiq Khān's Shāh Jahān Nāma for the reign of Shāh Jahān,[1] he may have used Abu'l Fazl's Annals of Aurangzeb's reign. A writer of a universal history of Mughal India up to his own times is more likely to use a work on a particular reign, than a writer on the reign of one emperor to lift it from a universal history. The internal evidence of the MS. makes it possible for Khāfī Khān to have used a work which might have been compiled by a contemporary. The additions he usually makes and alterations he effects fit in well with this suggestion. But for a contemporary of Aurangzeb to purloin Khāfī Khān's work and add to its account his own participation in certain events seems impossible and unlikely. The balance of plagiarism is turned against Khāfī Khān when we remember that his account of Shāh Jahān's reign is also indebted to another contemporary work. This seems to have been Khāfī Khān's usual method of writing history!

The fact that what we have long known as Khāfī Khān's account of Aurangzeb's reign turns out to be written by an important public servant of Aurangzeb's reign increases its value. It ceases to be the compilation of an historian who, with difficulty, ascertained the truth some years after the passage of those events. It becomes the work of a man who long participated in many important public events, and who as a newswriter and Darogha-i-Buyūtāt, had abundant opportunities of learning the true account of many important public events. It becomes an important document of Aurangzeb's reign precisely because it ceases to be Khāfī Khān's work.

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[1] Elliot and Dowson, vii, p. 133.